

RECORD OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BROOKLINE SCHOOL COMMITTEE ON **THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 2020** AT 12:00 PM (REMOTE VIA ZOOM). STATUTORY NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS FILED WITH THE TOWN CLERK.

School Committee Members Present: Suzanne Federspiel (Chair), David Pearlman (Vice Chair), Sharon Abramowitz, Helen Charlupski, Susan Wolf Ditkoff, Andreas Liu, Jennifer Monopoli, Mariah Nobrega, and Barbara Scotto. Also present: James Marini, Mary Ellen Normen, Casey Ngo-Miller, and Robin Coyne.

Others present: Director of Data Analysis and Information Management Erin Cooley, Director of Operations Matt Gillis, Director of Professional Development Michelle Herman, and Remote Task Force member David Gacioch.

Ms. Federspiel called the meeting to order at 12:00 PM.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

a. Consent Agenda

ACTION 20-95

On a motion of Ms. Nobrega and seconded by Ms. Monopoli, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) to approve the item included in the Consent Agenda.

- i. Past Record: July 27, 2020 School Committee Meeting

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Federspiel announced that the School Committee is waiting for more information and will not be voting on a reopening plan during today's meeting.

The following people spoke in support of a plan that provides more in-person instruction (particularly for younger grades) with the necessary safety measures in place: Carolyn Thall, Lauren Bernard, Amie Lindenboim, and Acacia Landfield. Comments included the following: families should be actively noticed when there are opportunities for public comment; no evidence that remote instruction will be better than it was in the spring; support the work of the Remote Task Force Expert Advisory Panels; don't lower the bar in Brookline; could be a phased-in approach; need to protect health and safety and make evidence-based decisions; consider providing extra time for snack and recess and not having letter grades; remote learning leads to inequities (e.g., some families aren't able to provide educational support to their children because parents/guardians are working in or out of the home and cannot afford tutors/pods/childcare, and some families have the means to transfer their children to private school); would like to know whether Brookline High School (BHS) instruction will be asynchronous; young children do comply with masks; should pursue opportunities for outdoor learning, including use of tents; prioritize young learners and social emotional needs of all learners; private camps and daycares have already opened.

The following people spoke in support of remote learning until it is safe to return to schools: Brookline Educators Union (BEU) President Jessica Wender-Shubow, David Knott, Paul Epstein, Sara Ebb, Lisa Soltani, Jesse Cochin, Shira Schwartzberg, Tatiana Beckwith, Mark Goldner, Jeremy Bloch, Susan Balogh, Laura West, Jacqueline Hallo, Amy Lewin, Marcia Gregg, David Richard, Alex Borns-Weil, Melanee Alexander, and Laura West. Comments included the following: the BEU is committed to making distance learning meaningful and high quality; in-person instruction with basic safety protocols will not look like past years, e.g., no small group work and collaboration; remote instruction will be much better than this past spring when there was no time for preparation; in-person learning could contribute to another surge; the district needs to prioritize student and staff health and safety; with early planning can provide the best possible instruction and instruction that reflects the district's values; experts say don't gather indoors; group work cannot be done in-person, but can be done remotely; need to make sure the district provides the least restrictive environment for special education students and that the program is safe and equitable; tents may not be the best use of limited funds (consider expanding Wi-Fi access); begin with a top-notch remote model, with opportunities for outdoor learning, until in-person learning is safe; ventilation issues have not yet been addressed; be proactive instead of reactive; there are many unanswered questions, e.g., air exchange monitoring and in bathrooms and hallways, extra staffing needs, who will cover classrooms when teachers are in quarantine; no clear timeline/metrics on when facilities will be safe; trust and listen to the teachers who want to do the best job possible; families may have members that are immunocompromised; will be more area risk once the college students return; confident teachers can build relationships with students under a remote model; staff members won't be able to support their children's learning and safety needs if they are expected to be working in Brookline buildings this fall.

Kristen Hung recommended that all students wear masks. She does not support full in-person learning. Health and safety should be the highest priorities.

Leigh Youmans, Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP) Co-President spoke in support of providing BEEP in-person, particularly while rates are relatively low. She commented on the following: the safety measures that have been put in place, children's relatively low transmission levels; how children learn; that many private early child care centers have already opened; and the financial stability of the BEEP Program.

Connie Clauson spoke about the importance of everyone in the community coming together to develop a plan and commit to a system where everyone belongs.

Randy Bradley-Campbell spoke about early childhood education needs and recommended that the district provide, at a minimum, individual student tool kits and one to one touch screen technology for in- and out-of-school use.

Danna Perry noted that the district will need significant resources to comply with the July 9, 2020 guidance on two-way dialogue between Special Education Directors and families. There needs to be an increase in trust between educators and families.

3. DISCUSSION OF FALL REOPENING PLANS FOR SUBMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION (DESE)

Ms. Federspiel and Dr. Marini thanked the speakers, and agreed that there are many unknowns at this point. Ms. Cooley commented that the district is now recommending that all in-person students (and staff) wear masks. Ms. Ngo-Miller noted that the district will be using an in-house remote model, not the State sponsored model. Mr. Gacioch reviewed health and safety protocols and ventilation issues.

School Committee Member Comments/Questions

- What are the metrics for determining when students/educators can be in classrooms?
- Need more information on the plan for remote learning.
- Give additional consideration to using outdoor spaces adjacent to schools for outdoor learning and providing opportunities for all students to meet each other and their teachers while the weather is still mild. Perhaps two class cohorts could meet outside per day.
- Requested additional information on the plan to maintain safety in common areas and on school buses.
- Will require substantial additional funds for items such as COVID-19 testing, staffing, physical space modification, and personal protective equipment. Will need the support of Town governing boards.
- Have a duty to the children to make sure that the system of instruction works.
- Noted the stress on families, particularly those in which one or two parents are working full-time in or out of the house.
- Concerned by how long it may take to assess each space. Need to check ventilation levels in all spaces, not just sample classrooms.
- Does the district have the funding and time to recruit and hire the necessary staff, including substitutes? Some current staff may decide not to return. Enrollment may be down, and perhaps, some staff could be reassigned.
- Requested additional information on Hybrid Model schedules.
- Requested additional information on safety and testing protocols.
- Need to schedule a Town-School Partnership meeting as soon as possible.
- In a remote model, need rigorous synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Instruction should be equitable, regardless of which model families choose.
- How will partner/group work, small intervention groups, and morning meeting be done in-person?
- Facilities piece is important, but need to also devote resources to pedagogy and making the remote academic experience as powerful as possible.

Dr. Marini will present an updated plan at the next School Committee meeting on August 10, 2020.

Mr. Gillis reviewed the ventilation metrics and the work being done at schools to reach ventilation targets. The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health has recommended that all indoor rooms should meet at least one of two air ventilation targets through a combination of a) fresh outdoor air, b) recirculated air filtered at MERV 13 level or higher (for rooms with mechanical ventilation), and c) use of portable air cleaners with HEPA filters. Mr. Gillis explained two options: Option 1 - at least 5.0 air changes per hour (ACH) of clear air-with the Healthy Buildings Team defining 4-5 ACH as “good,” 5-6 ACH as “excellent,” and 6+ ACH as “ideal”; or Option 2 - At least 15 liters per second per occupant of clean air, allowing for de-densification of occupancy of rooms that cannot fully meet the ACH-based target as a complimentary ventilation strategy. Mr. Gillis reviewed the plan to assess all schools, and develop a list of possible modifications (will vary depending upon the age, condition, and type of structure/ systems/windows). He would like to meet with Dr. Joseph Allen of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health on the methodology for measuring ventilation. Ms. Charlupski reported that the Parks and Recreation Commission will be meeting on August 11, 2020 to consider a request for possible placement of tents in park space and tennis and basketball courts adjacent to schools. Mr. Gillis reviewed COVID related expenses. The district has already ordered 100 HEPA air filters.

ACTION 20-96

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski and seconded by Ms. Nobrega, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) to authorize the district to procure 40 tents and 20 weighted barrels (rent for \$320,640, or purchase if more cost efficient).

ACTION 20-97

On a motion of Ms. Charlupski and seconded by Ms. Nobrega, the School Committee VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (by roll call) to authorize the district to purchase and install 360 desks (cost not to exceed \$50,000).

4. PROPOSED EXECUTIVE SESSION

By unanimous roll call vote at 4:30 PM, the School Committee entered into Executive Session pursuant to Massachusetts General laws chapter 30A section 21(a) for Purpose 3, to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the Brookline Educators Union (BEU) (Unit A, Unit B, and Paraprofessionals) because the Chair declared that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body. Ms. Federspiel announced that the meeting will not reconvene in open session at the end of the Executive Session. By unanimous roll call vote at 5:15 PM, the School Committee reconvened in public session for the purpose of adjournment.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Federspiel adjourned the meeting at 5:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robin E. Coyne, Executive Assistant
Brookline School Committee